

Testimony Submitted by Gladys Contreras to the Housing Committee
HB 6590: “An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care
Homes”
Connecticut General Assembly
February 7, 2023

Good morning Senator Moore, Representative Luxenberg, ranking members, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Gladys Contreras and I am the owner of Shiny Rock Daycare, a family child care program serving children and families in Stamford and the surrounding communities. I’ve worked in child care for many years. I earned my Childhood Development Associate credential from Norwalk Community College. I also regularly attend professional development classes through All Our Kin and Smart Kids. My program provides a safe, educational, and fun environment for children. Our curriculum is based on the children’s interests. We provide home-cooked meals based on the nutritional program offered by the state. We don’t follow school closings and are open all year to meet the needs of our families.

Currently, my program is only licensed to care for 6 children under 5 years old. During the pandemic, there were many families moving to Stamford from New York, New Jersey and other places. We received many phone calls from parents, which is why I decided to expand my family daycare to a group daycare. This change would mean we could care for up to 12 children. I did not realize that dealing with zoning would be such a big challenge. I applied for my group child care license in June 2021. Since last year I have been renting an empty space for my group daycare. Applying to zoning is really expensive; the application itself is \$1500. The application does not ensure that you will be approved by the zoning board and this fee is not refundable.

The zoning application is \$1500, but to meet all of the requirements from the Zoning Board is a different story. You have to hire an architect or an expert to help with all of the necessary documentation, surveys, location parking, plans, and more. If you don’t have all of this documentation already, it costs anywhere from \$6,000 to \$10,000. Plus you must pay for an attorney to make sure that all of your documents are in order. I also needed to hire a carpenter and an electrician. It’s a lot of money, especially if you’re only looking to care for two or three additional children. I’m still operating my family child care program. I only have time to speak with my lawyers during naptime or after the children leave in the evening. Investing this much time and money has been hard, because if 20 neighbors say yes and one says no, the Board still will not approve you, whether you meet their requirements or not.

I had my first meeting with the Zoning Board in July. The answer from zoning didn’t come until August. The process takes a long time. The members of the Zoning Board are experts in their field, but they are unfamiliar with family child care. I continue to have a waiting list and I’ve lost

a lot of families that cannot wait until I get approved by the Zoning Board. The families that I'm turning away, some of the mothers are still pregnant. They start looking for care months in advance.

To have a daycare is a special business. It's not only to earn money, it also helps families that have children that want to continue to be working professionals. We are not just here to watch children; we support their education and development. We are giving 100% to the children. The parents are developing and growing in their professions, feeling safe and sure that their children are in good hands. Child care is a beautiful business. Why complicate our lives when we are just trying to serve a few more children. Child care is good for our county. The economy will grow if we support working families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gladys Contreras
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